## Claims

1. A system for reading data from a protected media item, comprising:

a smart token carried by a user and containing a decryption key linked to a specific decryption device;

a hardware decryption module connectable to said smart token and functioning as a decryption device when the decryption key is linked to said hardware decryption module; and

a host device connectable to said hardware decryption module so that said hardware decryption module serves as a decryption device for said host device when the decryption key is linked to said hardware decryption module.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein said hardware decryption module reads the decryption key from the smart token when said smart token is connected to said hardware decryption module, determines whether the decryption key is linked to the hardware decryption module, and decrypts data from the protected media item prior to providing it to said host device when it is determined that the decryption key is linked to the hardware decryption module.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein said hardware decryption module comprises an external interface connected between said smart token and said host device.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein said hardware decryption module further comprises a control processor connected to said external interface for controlling operation of said hardware decryption module.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein said hardware decryption module further comprises a decryption processor connected to said control processor for decrypting the data from the protected media item prior to providing it to said host device.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein said hardware decryption module further comprises a memory for storing decryption key information for comparison with the decryption key from the smart token so as to determine whether the decryption key is linked to the hardware decryption module.

7. The system of claim 2, wherein said hardware decryption module comprises a control processor for controlling operation of said hardware decryption module.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein said hardware decryption module further comprises a decryption processor connected to said control processor for decrypting the data from the protected media item prior to providing it to said host device.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein said hardware decryption module further comprises a memory for storing decryption key information for comparison with the

decryption key from the smart token so as to determine whether the decryption key is linked to the hardware decryption module.

10. The system of claim 2, wherein said hardware decryption module comprises a decryption processor for decrypting the data from the protected media item prior to providing it to said host device.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein said hardware decryption module further comprises a memory for storing decryption key information for comparison with the decryption key from the smart token so as to determine whether the decryption key is linked to the hardware decryption module.

12. The system of claim 2, wherein said hardware decryption module comprises a memory for storing decryption key information for comparison with the decryption key from the smart token so as to determine whether the decryption key is linked to the hardware decryption module.

13. The system of claim 1, wherein said hardware decryption module comprises an external interface connected between said smart token and said host device.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein said hardware decryption module further comprises a control processor connected to said external interface for controlling operation of said hardware decryption module.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein said hardware decryption module further comprises a decryption processor connected to said control processor for decrypting the data from the protected media item prior to providing it to said host device.

16. The system of claim 1, wherein said hardware decryption module further comprises a control processor connected to said external interface for controlling operation of said hardware decryption module.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein said hardware decryption module further comprises a decryption processor connected to said control processor for decrypting the data from the protected media item prior to providing it to said host device.

18. The system of claim 1, wherein said hardware decryption module further comprises a decryption processor connected to said control processor for decrypting the data from the protected media item prior to providing it to said host device.

19. The system of claim 1, wherein said hardware decryption module comprises a case having a surface in which a plug is formed for connection to said host device, said case having a socket formed therein for receiving the smart token.

20. The system of claim 1, wherein said hardware decryption module comprises a case, a plug for connection to said host device, and a cable interconnecting said case and said plug, said case having a socket formed therein for receiving the smart token.

21. The system of claim1, wherein said hardware decryption module functions as a universal serial bus (USB) hub between said host device and said smart token, said hardware decryption module having a plug connectable to said host device and a socket for receiving said smart token.

22. The system of claim 1, wherein said host device sends to said hardware decryption module at least one of an initialize decrypt command, a decrypt data block command, a make copy command, and a retrieve player digital identifier (PDI) command.

23. The system of claim 1, wherein said hardware decryption module sends to said host device at least one of returned decrypted data, a returned encrypted record, and a returned hardware decryption module player digital identifier.

24. The system of claim 1, wherein said hardware decryption module comprises a self-contained device which is tamperproof so as to prevent compromise and copying of information stored therein.